Church Government.

The errors of church government are what these communications propose to treat upon; and the questionable appendage of the adoption of a religious garment or religious fashion in apparel will be the theme in this epistle.

"Therefore take no thought * * wherewithal shall we be clothed." Matt. 6:31. Since we are excluded from our old associates, we do not hear so much about this clothes question as we formerly did, but it nevertheless exists. We hear numerous instances where a sister is told "you may wear your hat;" and just lately a revival was held not far away, where their papers announced that the Lord was in the work, and the word is abroad that the minister announced to a number of sisters that they could wear just what they pleased." Fifty-five were said to be admitted into the ark at this place.

Now the writer does not believe very much in clothes religion. A brother or sister may wear the uniform as established by a denomination, and no objections are well founded on that account. But the moment it is said, "this is my religion," the assertion becomes a hindrance to the cause of Christ.

Perhaps before proceeding farther, it is necessary to demolish the stubble or pretense that is called to sustain this manmade substitute for Christian religion. "Likewise ye wives * * whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting of hair and wearing of gold, or putting on of apparel, but let it be the hidden man of the heart." 1 Peter 3:1, 4. Here Peter intimates that it is the inward adorning of the heart that he is recommending. "For after this manner in the old time the holy women also who trusted in God adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands." The advocates of a religious, fashionable garment in effect say that this scripture forbids the putting on of outward apparel, at least they say it forbids the wearing of gold, and apparel is classed with gold here, and if it forbids one it forbids the other. But Peter says that it is "the hidden man of the heart" that he recommends, and expressly says so. Paul says, 1 Tim. 2:9. "In like manner also that women adorn themselves in modest apparel * * not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls or costly array, but * * with good works. The advocates say that this scripture teaches that the outward apparel must be modest. Paul says it is good works he has reference to.

A correspondent in one of the church papers of one of the three divisions some time ago had the following: "Any order of dress that is plain * * and modest apparel in accordance with the laws of nature, health and comfort is from heaven." This brother must have had a revelation, for there is no scripture that teaches us that fashions, or order of dress come from heaven. Paris would come nearer the location. The world will not recognize that clothes are from heaven, nor yet the order of a fashion in dress. Christ established none. He left this subject of dress out of the new dispensation, and we should look upon it as the result of wisdom. All nations have a style of apparel, some of which do not change for ages. Ethiopian, Jew and Gentile, have had their standing styles, and their nationality could be known by their fashions.

The world has many foolish, changeable fashions that cause humanity almost to revolt at the absurdities. Some are also very commendable. It is consistent in the philosophy of God, economy to seek an equilibrium. So also this subject, by the philosophy, divides from a common centre in the manner that children do on a see-saw; as one moves away from the center, the other must also move away to balance himself with his opponent. This, however, is philosophy; and extreme begets extreme, is very questionable in the Christian dispensation; for we are to be steadfast in the faith, and this theory of meeting extreme by extreme, would necessarily compel us to move about at the pleasure of the enemy. The question now before us is, are we required to wear clothes different from the society in which we go? In the opinion of the writer, it is one of the most misleading dogmas of the present age. If religious sects were wiped out that have not the mark of this beast written upon their forehead, in two hundred years from now, if a Bible could be found in the world, it would be one that accidentally would have been hidden in the rubbish. Zeal is the life of the Christian, but if it is diverted from Christ and cemented on the devotional garb, the minister need not be surprised when his heart-searching sermon magnifies the sister in front of him to unconsciousness, and at the same time beholds two sisters in the rear of her, stealthily measuring the width of her apron string. A circumstance took place in this vicinity where a pious sister extended her salutations, when one sister drew away and said, "no you have a ruffle on your dress."

There is a sentiment prompted by common sense toward plainness of dress everywhere, even among the devotees of fashion, which many follow reluctantly. Modest apparel, if it even would apply to the outward garment, does not define a fashion; it means to hide the uncomely parts. The garment is a necessity and must be changed to suit the occasion, wet or dry, cold or warm, and when we go to church, we put on clean clothes, and when we go to dirty work, we put on clothes that are suited to the occasion; hence the wisdom in God in allowing man to choose for himself. The enthusiasm and eulogy of the people when the news reached them that Mrs. Grant appeared at an evening levee in a plain dress while she was mistress of the White House, showed the temper of the people on this subject. A great reform could be brought about by some of these virtuous women. But by the errors of church government no reform will ever be brought about. Plainness is not the object. When the question was brought before A. M. that the brethren in Denmark wore yet plainer clothes than we do in America, it was decided that they must conform to the order of the brethren in America. Not plainness that they were after, but a fashion.

We read that the children of Israel, when their mediator was absent for a few days, took their gold rings and moulded them into a calf, which they worshipped. Now is it not possible that this clothe question is about one of the same manufactured instruments of hand work that Aaron's calf was. And the prophet Hosea says, "Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves." Hosea 13:2. This calf received about as much kissing as the pope's infallibility did. If this conformity (a nickname for fashion) is of God, we cannot overthrow it, but if it is of men it will come to naught. Now if God is the author of these fashions, where is the authority found. The scriptures quoted 1 Peter 3:1, 4, and 1 Tim. 2:9, proves about as much in favor of outward uniformity, as the quotation selected by the old deaconness in favor of infant baptism. The quotation was as follows: "And Balaam saddled his ass." One of the class leaders called out, "sister what has that to do with infant baptism," the sister replied: "Very much indeed. Balaam was just going to take one of his children on that animal to the preacher to have it baptized. The Quakers have their fashion; the Amish have their fashion, including hooks and eyes; the priest has his sacred garment made after a fashion; and when we ask some of these devotees for a reason for being so persistent, they will reply as the writer heard many of them do: "that the soldiers wear uniforms, the Oddfellows wear uniforms, the Masons wear uniforms, fire companies wear uniforms, and therefore why cannot we wear uniforms. They wear these uniforms so as to know one another when they meet, and that is why we wear them." Christ says "by their works ye shall know them." The writer may bear a little testimony in favor of this uniformity. He was once at Ashland at an A. M., 1881, and in passing a saloon with green ears before the door, a rather loud noise could be heard within, and after passing and looking back, two brethren with uniforms on emerged from that place. By their works they would hardly have passed for brethren, but the uniform made it all right. There is enough in the scriptures to satisfy any impartial mind that Christ established no fashion of the garment, and that Christ and the apostles, although of the same nationality, did not wear clothes alike. Christ wore a coat without a seam woven from top throughout. This was perhaps what we call knit work. John had a raiment of camel's hair; Paul wore a cloak.

The work of the apostles was among different nations; Romans, Ethiopians, and perhaps every nation in the then known world, all of which had undoubtedly their different styles, and yet nowhere is anything said where their conversion is recorded about the manner of wearing their clothing. The people of this world, the field of labor, cannot be deceived. They can read the scripture just as well as we can and just as we read it. They read how baptism is commanded, and what is said about communion, supper, feetwashing, etc. We may tell them we take the word of God and it alone, as the rule of our faith and practice, and it will cut like a two-edged sword. But the moment we touch on that outward garment as a condition of salvation, it will serve as a stumbling-block, for they know that there is no such condition in the new dispensation. They know that it is only the doctrine and commandments of men, and conclude at once that it is one of Aaron's calves that somebody wants kissed. This subject was at one time a condition of almost all the denominations, but the taste of the medicine cured the remedy, because the remedy was worse than the disease; and to make their brethren wear their grandfather's coat collar did not lead to sanctification.

Now, in conclusion, the writer wishes to say that his understandings are that the ways of the Lord are wide enough and narrow enough for any purpose that is necessary to work in his vineyard, and that it is not necessary to lay additional burdens on the followers of Christ, than that which he has lain on them. "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." An uncomfortable and ill-shaped garment, in order to be odd from those around us, cannot even be justified by the word modesty. Such lights will not shine in the darkest nights, much less in daytime. This innovation can only serve to mislead and take captive silly women, and ignorant or designing men. There can be no saving grace in it. But, "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Paul says, Gal. 1:11, 12, "But I certify to you brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man, for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

DANIEL MILLER.

Sidney, Ind.

One of Rev. Mark Guy Pearse's sermons in St. James Hall, London, on "Our Burden Bearer," enforced the *doing* of the text: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord," etc.: "And on our part, too, the words mean something very definite and real—*cast thy burden.* It is wonderful how we not only cheat ourselves with words in religion, but, even worse than that, we take all the meaning out of the words. *Cast.* That seems plain enough for anything, and yet we try to put a score of things in place of it. We kneel and sigh about our burden, and pray that we *may* cast it upon the Lord—but *we don't do it.* We look up and sigh and resolve that we will—and we go on resolving, and nothing comes of it. Some years ago I was staying in a Swiss city, and from the windows of my hotel I looked out on the bridge that crossed the Rhine. At the middle of the bridge there was a tiny wayside chapel, and as the peasants went to market they set the heavy basket down on the steps while they turned in to pray. Then they came out and took up their burdens again. That is how many people do with their troubles—they pray about them, and then pick them up again. What folly it is to call that *casting*! On the other side of the parapet there swept the swift current of the Rhine. Now, if one should take up the load with both hands, and swing it with all his might over the side, and then let it go whirling through space until it splashed into the waters, and went, swept away forever—that *is casting.* So, then, on the Lord's part and on ours here is *something to be done.* To hear of it only is nothing—less than nothing. Do not let us cheat ourselves with words."